

Original speech by WSC chair Kees Oosterlee (has been replaced by a short toast)

Occasion: 40th Woudschoten Conference

Date: October 7, 2015



Participants of the 19th Woudschoten Conference of the Dutch-Flemish Numerical Analysis Communities (26–28 September, 1994).

Photo by Paul de Zeeuw

Dear ladies and gentlemen, dear members of the community Scientific Computing,

I wish you a very welcome to our celebration related to the 40th Woudschoten conference. This conference is held annually, and now already 40 times in a row. This is a good reason for a special Woudschoten meeting, with very prominent and excellent speakers, the special presentation with the historical overview by Gerard Alberts, and this reception to celebrate. Numerical analysis and scientific computing are youngest of the mathematical disciplines, as we just heard, part of the Mathematical Sciences.

Next to our distinguished speakers this year, I would, in particular, like to give a warm welcome to our emeritus and retired professors, scientists and former secretaries of the working community, who came here especially this year to celebrate with us. They have attended, planned and organised many of the 40 Woudschoten meetings. It is also due to many of them that this conference series has been set up, forty years ago. And that it continued over the years, each year looking for interesting themes, finding excellent researchers to present their work, and also to make the community aware each year of the Woudschoten conference to come. This is a community that has been established with a pure scientific interest, and an interest to have a close interaction with each other. A so-called bottom up community, in a way, not driven by interests of Science Foundations, or Universities. Maybe this is the way it works best.

In former times at the Woudschoten conferences, there were typically two themes, with three presenters each, connected to the two important parts of our Dutch numerical community at that time, discretisation schemes for partial differential equations, and numerical linear algebra and efficient solution methods. Since 1996 the Flemish research community formally joined and enriched the community and the committees to organise the Woudschoten meetings. Approximately 10 years ago, a wave of retirements and new hirings took place in Numerical Analysis. So, the composition of the faculties changed; the research groups in the Netherlands and Flanders have become more diverse, which is also observed internationally. This is reflected in the themes that we have seen in the more recent Woudschoten conferences, ranging from computational imaging, interaction between numerics and stochastics, aspects of high performance computing, multi-scale modelling, and so on. Compared to the earlier times, there is more focus on addressing the PhD students, and thus on more introductory lectures by the presenters especially for their first lectures. When we look at the Woudschoten participation numbers, we see that these changes appear to work well. Since 2008, we have, next to Woudschoten, annually a Spring Meeting in which members of our Dutch and Flemish communities, PhD students and new faculty people with exciting new results, present their work. This meeting is successful, well attended, and the quality of the presentations is high. Our community is very lively, it is modernised and it continues on the path way laid 40 years ago.

For 39 times the meeting has been held here in Woudschoten; and once, the first time, in another center. The Woudschoten conference place has changed, has become more luxurious, and, next to that, our funding situation for the meeting has changed. Nowadays, some research groups participate with ten or more people, and that urges us to keep the conference fees as low as possible. Already from the early days I remember (my early days is end-of-the-eighties, early nineties) participation by researchers from the industry and governmental organisations, like from Philips researchers, Shell, Deltares, RIVM, etc. In that respect, it is great that we were able now to combine basic funding from the Science Foundation with additional financial support from companies and institutes. This is highly acknowledged by us, and important for the success of our Woudschoten conferences in the future. Therefore, I'd like to mention the financial support from NWO (science foundation), 3TU.AMI (the foundation of the three technical universities in the Netherlands), NDNS+ (Dutch mathematical cluster regarding natural sciences and dynamical systems), KNAW (Royal Dutch Academy of Sciences), CSER (consortium between physics science foundation and Shell research), HP computers, LIME BV and VORtech BV, two companies, in Eindhoven and Delft, resp. on mathematical consulting and HPC. Fundamental support, the back up for the financial planning, human support and a true warm heart for our community and its activities can be found in the CWI, the Dutch research center in mathematics and computer science in Amsterdam. Over the years, they have provided us with the secretaries of our working community, which are the vital persons for us. They organise the meetings, they are active throughout the year; keep the web page up to date, to name a few tasks. For several years now, since 2008, it is Margreet Nool who is doing this great work for us. However, also Jan Kok, present today, did this for 12 years, Walter Lioen, also present, once, Willem Hunsdorfer, this year our chairman for 5 years, and Jan Verwer, who was our chairman but also our secretary for six years (and passed away so suddenly). Traditionally, the secretary has come from CWI, and we aim to keep it this way for many years to come. The times are a changing, but if we can continue with all the support, the community stays fit for the future.

I remember my first Woudschoten in 1989, with Steve Mc Cormick and Mary Wheeler, among several others, as two speakers. Walking through the forest around Woudschoten we saw Steve Mc Cormick everywhere running in the spare time, together with Henk van der Vorst. Mary Wheeler, I remember, was giving one of her presentations with slides on an the overhead

projector. At that time, the overhead's wire connection to the electricity was lying on the stage and, very unfortunately, in the middle of a detailed explanation, Mrs. Wheeler fell over the wire and fell down. Immediately people on the front row in the audience stood up, and helped her up. When she stood again, a minute or two later, she immediately continued her scientific explanation as if nothing had happened. Very remarkable. Instead of the soccer matches organised in later Woudschoten years, Flanders against the Netherlands, in 1989 there was a volunteering music combo, composed of mathematicians headed by Rik Kaasschieter (at that time in Delft, now in Eindhoven) entertaining the community in the free time. These are memories from 26 years ago. This year, we have approximately 138 participants (last count), and we didn't even announce it on NA-NET this year. 67 of the participants are PhD students, which is another sign of an active and lively community.

40 years Woudschoten is an excellent reason to celebrate; it is a nice round number, but let's in 10 years celebrate again and see how our community and our meetings have evolved. I bring a toast on our community!